

The Link

December 1999

The National Organization of Professional Black Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees

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Lead Story

International Activities

Editor's Note - The U.S. Department of Agriculture is helping the Republic of South Africa solve natural resource issues in that country. Below are two stories that showcase how Organization members are helping in this project:

Organization Members Assist South Africa to Develop Natural Resource Program

Submitted by Ann English, Minnesota

Several Organizations members have been instrumental in helping the Republic of South Africa develop a natural resource program called LandCare.

Lawrence Clark, Deputy Chief of Science and Technology, has played a critical role in the program's development in South Africa. He was instrumental in establishing the team of five U.S. Department of Agriculture employees who visited South Africa. Members of the U.S. Land Care Team include Team Leader Lloyd Wright, a retired NRCS employee; Gretty Boley, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Forest Service; Ronald Williams, Strategic Planner, NRCS; Wildon Fontenot, Water Resources Specialist, NRCS; and Ann English, Assistant State Conservationist, Field Operations, NRCS. The team visited the Republic of South Africa July 31 through August 27, 1999.

Clark is a member of the United States-South Africa Binational Commission, established in 1995. The commission is one of four binational commissions established with other countries under the leadership of Vice President Al Gore. An Agriculture Committee was established in December 1995. It is co-chaired by Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman and South African Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs, Derek Hanekom.

One of the commission's programs is LandCare, a movement developed in Australia that encourages sustainable land management ethics and activities and is driven by landowners and land users. South Africa faces the challenge of how to communicate this grassroots ethic and implement a program that best fits the unique history and characteristics of the country.

The team visited South Africa to make observations and exchange ideas with officials from South Africa's National Department of Agriculture. Another goal is to assist South Africa in defining, planning and implementing the LandCare program.

South Africa has established a national LandCare program to help communities and individuals adopt an ecologically sustainable approach to the management of the nation's land, vegetation, water, and biological diversity, while improving their livelihood. The primary objectives of LandCare are to:

- manage for a sustainable natural resource base
- business development
- job creation and sustainable employment
- capacity building (awareness and education)
- evaluation, monitoring and research

South Africa is using the LandCare program to address major natural resource issues and rural development and other concerns confronting resource-poor people living in rural Black communities and villages.

Ms. Njabulo Nudli, Director of the Directorate, Agriculture Land Resource Conservation, asked the team to evaluate various projects and determine if they met and/or would meet the primary objectives of LandCare. With this charge, the team traveled over 3,000 miles via automobile and visited over 30 LandCare or potential



Team Member Ann English and Ms. Njabulo Nudli, Director of the Directorate, Agriculture Land Resource Conservation, at the team's headquarters in South Africa.

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More ➡



Ron Williams takes notes as he and the team evaluates a LandCare site.

LandCare project sites in rural Black communities and villages in the Northern, Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape provinces. For two weeks, the team met and talked with community leaders, citizens, soil conservation technicians, Extension agents, farmers, and non-government officials.

The team observed several LandCare Program successes. For example, some temporary short-term jobs are being created in resource-poor areas with high unemployment. The jobs typically last for two or three months or until funds run out. A number of local community leaders are emerging and natural resources are being protected. However, the team identified a number of issues that should be addressed in order for the LandCare South Africa Program to be more successful. Based on the LandCare Team's observations and subsequent discussions with the National Department of Agriculture officials, LandCare South Africa is now looking at rural development, also.

The U.S. Team experienced two memorable moments while in South Africa. The team met with the Chief of one of the villages in Elukwatine. The custom is when a person or group speaks with the Chief, the women sit to the right of the Chief on the ground and the men sit to the left. Lloyd Wright explained the purpose of our visit to the Chief. In the second example, several groups of students at the Kwabo Primary School in Bebeza did their traditional dance and song in their native language. At the end, the teachers also did traditional dance and song. The team participated in the dancing.

NRCS Helping South Africa with Proposed Tech Guide

Submitted by Michell Dunn, East Regional Office

Several Organization members were among a team that visited the Republic of South Africa recently to help that country implement a Field Office Technical Guide.

Team members included Team Leader Harvey Mack, Resource Conservationist, Sacramento, California; Bobby Ward, Soil Scientist, Texas; Shirley Merritt, Deputy State Conservationist, Georgia; Art Brate, State Conservation Engineer, Ohio; Richard (Rick) Cantu, Area Resource Conservationist, Kansas; and Jerry Namken, Senior Economist, National Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and the South African National Department of Agriculture are collaborating on this project under the auspices of the United States/South African Binational Commission (BNC). The BNC is one of four binational commissions established with other countries under the leadership of Vice President Al Gore. The United States-South African Commission was established in 1995. Its Agriculture Committee, approved in December 1995, is co-chaired by USDA Secretary Dan Glickman and South African Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs, Derek Hanekom. Larry Clark, Deputy Chief for Science and Technology, is co-chair of the Sustainable Natural Resources Working Group. He sponsored the NRCS team.

The U.S. team and its South African counterpart developed the framework for a technical guide called "The Sustainable Use Resources Technical Guide." This proposed guide could become the primary technical reference for the National and Provincial Departments of Agriculture. It will contain technical information about the sustainable uses of soil, water, plant, animal and human resources.

The team visited seven of the nine provinces to get a clear understanding of the agricultural and conservation activities that are being done in the country. Team members visited research institutes, agriculture colleges, and various farming enterprises. They also met with staff from the Provincial Departments of Agriculture to determine their interest in a national document that could be adapted for local use.

The team visited several Tribal homelands to get a better understanding of the emerging and current farming activities that are occurring there.

The President's Message



Greeting! When we assemble on December 8, 1999, in Atlanta, Georgia, it will only be 23 ½ days before The New Millennium. The 20th Century will be history or will it?

If someone were to ask you to name a great historical event or events you witnessed in your lifetime, what will it be? You will probably experience problems listing just one event because there are so many to choose from. You are not alone.

Now that you have given some thought to your past, let me share with you some important future needs to help you bridge the gap to the new millennium and achieve your field of dreams. These future needs are:

The ability to build a new and better tool box.

Take a very hard look at the contents of your toolbox. Examine the tools that you have been working with for the past few years. If they are not already outdated, chances are they will be outdated in the new millennium.

Starting today, figure out how your current job is changing and how tomorrow's tools and methods will alter the way you work. Embrace the new technologies. Learn how to use them. Take personal responsibility for mastering this new gear.

Gain as much knowledge as you can.

Knowledge is and will always be the source of power, and you have a great chance to increase your share of it.

Basically, we have more brainpower working for us these days than ever before because of population growth and new technologies. Put all this human and electronic brainpower together, and it positions us to accomplish things that would have been considered miracles at the beginning of this century.

Make wise choices.

You live a life rich with alternatives. Former employees did not have the opportunity to share in the current information/technology and the vast network of support and information exchange. Every day, we are offered many opportunities to improve. We can avail ourselves of career development training, and learn new skills on how to succeed in

various jobs, as well as how to adapt in a world of constant and rapid change.

Become a trendsetter.

Taking on new initiatives these days means being out front. An agency must keep reshaping itself, shifting and flexing to fit the rapidly changing needs of its customers. That's the only way it can hope to survive in this fiercely competitive environment. Leaders cannot allow the agency or employees to become complacent.

Resistance to change is almost always a dead-end street.

Understand the sense of urgency.

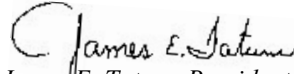
What this means is that "slow" kills agencies, companies, and organizations. And that, of course, means the death of many careers.

To survive and gain any competitive advantage, you must travel light and cover ground quickly. We live in an impatient world, with fierce competition and fleeting opportunities. If you are lean, agile, and quick to respond, you will clearly have the edge. The agency cannot move fast if its employees are moving slow.

As the new millennium moves closer, let me leave you with several secrets to help you become successful:

- Make it easier for your agency or organization to change.
- Speed up everything you touch.
- Think "new and improved".
- Build your knowledge base.

Make sure your agency and organization stay "intact" as you bridge the gap to the new millennium.


James E. Tatum, President

Organization Seeks Committee Chairs for 2000

Submitted by President James Tatum

The Organization has had a busy and productive year! Thank you members, for supporting the efforts of The Organization! A special thanks to committee chairs and committee members for a job well done! We see the fruit of your labors throughout The Organization, in your communities and within NRCS. As we begin planning for next year, we are interested in hearing from those of you who would like to serve as a committee chair in 2000. As a reminder, our standing committees are: Agriculture, Awards, Budget, Communications, Constitution and By-laws, Education & Career Development, Historical Black Colleges, Liaison, Urban,

and Ways & Means. The Organization's Constitution and By-laws will provide you with information about the duties of a committee chair.

If you have an interest in serving as a committee chair, please submit your name and your committee of interest to me by Friday, January 7th, 2000. I can be reached by telephone at 301-390-4033 or by e-mail at jtatum@nracs.usda.gov.

8th Annual Training Conference

*Submitted by Sarah Marshall,
Conference Coordinator*

Welcome to Atlanta for The Organization's 8th Annual Training Conference. We hope you are ready to enjoy an exciting conference.

Our opening keynote speaker is Dr. Nikki Giovanni, English Professor and Poet, and our banquet speaker is Congressman Danny K. Davis from Illinois.

A few conference reminders:

- The six scheduled training courses will last 1½ days. You will attend only one course. Persons in attendance will receive a certificate of training.
- Exhibits and poster papers must be set up on Wednesday morning and taken down on Friday afternoon.
- Please remember to participate in the silent auction. It's fun to see the enthusiasm, creativity, and motivation that go into this activity and wondering who will get the final bid.

The Organization is sponsoring a group of high school students at this year's meeting. These students, with an interest in agriculture, will be introduced to the NRCS family and will be mentored by local chapter members. Be sure to meet and greet the students throughout the conference.

National Organization of Professional Natural Resources Conservation Employees 8th Annual Conference December 7-11, 1999

AGENDA

Tuesday, December 7

Travel Day

3:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Registration

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Executive Board Meeting

Wednesday, December 8

8:00 a.m. Open Registration

8:00 a.m. - Noon Regional Meetings

Noon - 1:00 p.m. Lunch on Own

1:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Opening Session

Moderator: *Sherman L. Lewis, OK*

Welcome *Earl Cosby, State Conservationist, GA*

Greetings *Charles Adams, Regional Conservationist Southeast*

President's

Remarks *James E. Tatum, President, MD*

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. Remarks from Organizations

Mon Yee, President, Asian-Pacific Islander Organization

Rebecca de la Torre, President, National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees

Richard Vigil, First Vice President, American Indian/Alaskan Native Employee Association

Craig Cox, Executive Vice President, Soil and Water Conservation Society

Melvin Crum, State Representative, South Carolina Rural America Association of Community-Based Organizations

2:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Animal Feeding Operation Presentation
Tom Christensen

3:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Break

3:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. .. **Keynote Speaker**
Dr. Nikki Giovanni, Poet and Professor of English, Blacksburg, VA

4:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Conference Charge and Remarks
James E. Tatum

5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Networking Session
Exhibits/Poster Papers

7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Moderators/Facilitators Meeting

Thursday, December 9

8:00 a.m. - Noon Training Sessions

12:00 N - 2:00 p.m. Small Farmer Luncheon

Speaker: *Ms. Glenda Humiston, Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Washington, DC*

Thursday, December 9 (Continued)

2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. ... Training Sessions
Continued

5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Networking
Session

Exhibits/Poster Papers

Friday, December 10

8:00 - Noon Training Sessions
Continued

12:00 - 2:00 p.m. Awards Luncheon

Moderators: *Charles Whitmore,*
Chair, Awards Committee

Jesse K. Moore,
Chair, Historically Black Colleges
and Universities Committee

2:00 - 4:00 p.m. Ethics Panel

4:00 - 5:00 p.m. Soil Scientists
Panel - Celebrating
the Centennial

Closing Remarks *President Tatum*

Saturday, December 11

9:00 - 11:00 a.m. Business Meeting

6:00 - 9:00 p.m. Banquet

Moderator: *Lloyd Wright, Retired,*

Keynote Speaker:

Honorable Danny K. Davis, Illinois

Southeast Region Holds Second Training Conference

Submitted by Naomi Johnson,
Tennessee

Motivational speaker A. Moses White was among several speakers at the Southeast Region's Second Annual Training conference, held in Birmingham, Alabama. This year's theme was "Revitalizing Economic Stability for a Better Southeast." The Alabama chapter hosted the meeting and was commended for doing an outstanding job.

Establish a good support system with black newspapers within your community, White said. He encouraged members to submit articles about The Organization's activities and accomplishments to black-owned newspapers across the country. "There are more than 180 of these newspapers, and we should support them," White said. In addition, The Organization should speak out on behalf of black farmers through its outreach efforts. White envisions The Organization forming an alliance with minority farmers for joint

projects, including the development of a centralized warehouse for product distribution.

Attorney J.L. Chestnut Jr. updated the participants on the black farmers' lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The seven law firms involved in the case have spent approximately \$8 million on the case, he said. Chestnut predicted there would be more lawsuits in the future. He said people would be held accountable for their actions; some might even lose their jobs. He also predicted that once the lawsuit ends, a monitoring program will be established.

Dr. Eddie B. Thomas, Assistant Vice President for Community Outreach, gave an excellent presentation on economic development and outreach activities. Dr. Thomas encouraged the members to "have a vision, be creative, and frame your life so faith will get you through."

During the conference, other speakers inspired and enlightened participants about The Organization and NRCS' activities. James Tatum updated participants on The Organization activities. He also stressed the importance of all employees sharpening their skills. He challenged members to continue learning.

Charles Adams, Regional Conservationist, Southeast, updated participants on the NRCS budget, FY-2000 staffing, and administrative convergence. He also informed members that Chief Pearlie Reed will chair the National Food and Agriculture Council on January 1, 2000.

Other speakers included James W. Ford, State Conservationist, Tennessee; Earl Cosby, State Conservationist, Georgia; Eston Williams, Regional Representative, Southeast, Lawrence McGhee, Past President, Alabama Chapter; and Patricia Alexander, Birmingham City Councilor.



LtoR - Eston Williams, Southeast Regional Representative, Dr. Eddie B. Thomas, Asst. Vice President for Community Outreach Programs and Andrew Williams, Alabama Chapter President



Conference Participants



LtoR - Charles Roberts, Treasurer, Jim Tatum, President, Eston Williams, Regional Representative, A. Moses White, Motivational and Spiritual Speaker, and Anjanette Billups, Outreach Coordinator.

NRCS News...

HOT Web Sites

Submitted by Esther Bright, Colorado

Job-related technical and scientific information can be at your fingertips in seconds when you can get it "off the net". Some of the popular sites for Natural Resources Conservation Service employees are the following:

Subject

Popular Internet Web Sites

Ag Biology	http://www.fws.gov/
Ag Engineering	http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/engin.html
Agronomy	http://agguide.agronomy.psu.edu/default.html
Conservation Practice Standards	http://www.ncg.nrcs.usda.gov/practice_std.html
Geographic Information Systems	http://www.esri.com/library/gis/
Non-point Source Pollution	http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/NPS/ and http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/info/NewsNotes/
NRCS Customer Service Toolkit	http://www.itc.nrcs.usda.gov/toolkit/index.htm
NRCS Homepage	http://www.nrcs.usda.gov
NRCS Information Technology	http://www.itc.nrcs.usda.gov
National Resources Inventory (NRI)	http://www.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/nri_data.html
Personnel- Employee Express	http://www.employeeexpress.gov
Plant Materials	http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov
Snow Survey	http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/
Soil Erosion	http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/land/env/soil1.html
Soil Survey Info	http://www.statlab.iastate.edu:80/soils/osd
Soils NSSC Homepage	http://www.statlab.iastate.edu/soils/nssc/
Urban Conservation	http://www.libablecommunities.gov
USDA homepage	http://www.usda.gov
Water Quality	http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/land/env/wq1.html and http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/
Watersheds	http://www.cwp.org/
Wetlands	http://www.nhq.nrcs.usda.gov/land/env/wet1.html

If you know of other web sites that should be mentioned in future issues of The Link, please send me an e-mail at esther.bright@co.usda.gov.

Chief's Feedback System

Submitted by Jackie Diggs, National Headquarters

Chief Pearlle Reed has activated a feedback system to communicate directly with employees, customers and partners. Organization members are encouraged to use the system. The electronic system, activated in September 1999, is intended for employees to send direct comments and feedback anonymously to the Chief about the agency's products, services, and delivery mechanisms. It is a tool to receive unfiltered comments from our conservation partners, customers, and employees. It is not intended to handle individual employee complaints and grievances. Personal employee issues should be handled through the normal human resources process.

How the Feedback System Works?

There are two ways to send comments:

- The World Wide Web - On the NRCS Home page, click on Feedback.

Click on the web page response form. In the message box, enter your comment.

- Electronic mail system - Send an e-mail to the following address: chiefs.feedback@nrcs.usda.gov

The identity and location of the sender will be automatically stripped from each web or e-mail message before it is read by anyone. No identifying information will be retained.

New Streambank Restoration Handbook Available

*Submitted by Jerry M. Bernard,
National Headquarters*

There's more to a stream than rushing or meandering water. A stream corridor, or stream valley, is a complex and valuable ecosystem, which includes the land, plants, animals, and network of streams within it.

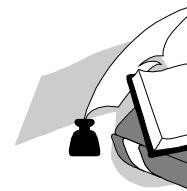
Fifteen federal agencies of the U.S. Government, in collaboration with

academia and other professionals, produced a single reference document, entitled "Stream Corridor Restoration: Principles, Processes, and Practices." These agencies, as well as many others who are interested in restoring the functions and values of the nation's stream corridors, are using this benchmark document.

The United States has 3.5 million miles of rivers. The 1992 National Water Quality Inventory, conducted on 642,881 miles of rivers, showed only 56 percent of them fully supported multiple uses, including drinking water supply, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, and agriculture, as well as flood prevention and erosion control. In the remaining 44 percent of stream miles inventoried, sedimentation and excess nutrients were the most significant causes of degradation. Sediment problems result from soil erosion from watersheds and streambanks.

Today, interest in restoring stream corridors is expanding nationally and internationally, as indicated by increasing numbers of case studies, published papers, technology exchanges, research projects, and symposia. Stream corridors are increasingly recognized as critical ecosystems supporting interdependent uses and values.

To view or download the handbook, access it on the Internet at http://www.usda.gov/stream_restoration, including high-resolution images. It can also be ordered in hard copy or CD by calling 1-800-553-NTIS or <http://www.ntis.gov>. It has been distributed to all NRCS offices as Part 653 of the National Engineering Handbook.



Book Review...

Featuring—
"Look In, Look Up, Look Out"
By Dr. Joyce L. Vedral

Reviewed by Dorothea Martinez

When I saw this book in the library, I looked at it several times before skimming through it. I looked at the title and I thought, "What kind of name is that for a book... 'Look In, Look Up, Look Out'?"

However, the caption at the top of the book—"8 Keys to the Life of Your Dreams"—really sparked my interest. One can say that this is a good example of the cliché, "You can't judge a book by its cover". Once I read the inside cover of the book, I felt there was more to the book than the title had insinuated. If I had not read the inside cover, I would have missed an opportunity to share this very informative book with you.

In this book, Dr. Joyce Vedral, a nationally known author and fitness expert, talks about eight keys that can unlock the door to your dreams. I selected five of them to give you a general idea about the book's contents.

#1 - The Power of Your Inner Voice - Vedral refers to the inner voice as that little voice we sometimes call our conscience. Have you ever found yourself in a position where you were undecided about doing something? Your first instinct actually tells you what you should do, but you ignore that little voice. Later something unpleasant happens and you find yourself saying, "I knew I should have followed my first instinct." Vedral explains that this is the subconscious mind speaking to you. She says we should always listen to that little voice because it always knows, even when you feel you are unaware of what you should do.

#2 - The Power of Self-Esteem - Self-esteem refers to the way you feel about yourself. Here are her suggestions to boost self-esteem.

- Find something small and succeed at it.
- Get in shape.
- Contribute to the world around you by doing something good for someone else.
- Stand up for what you believe in.
Your self-esteem suffers when you don't assert yourself.

#3 - The Power of Letting Go of the Past and Moving On - When you let go of the past you liberate yourself, according to Vedral. Think of a time when you felt angry because someone did something to you that you did not like. Instead of holding it inside and allowing it to fester and make you angrier, just let it go, Vedral says. When you forgive and release the anger and the urge for revenge, you free yourself. This helps you to move on. Forgiving does not mean that you agree with what was done to you, it means you've decided to put your energies into good thoughts rather than negative ones. This is one way to turn your negative energy into positive energy.

#4 - The Power of Your Will - Webster's Dictionary defines the word, "will" as the ability to control one's own actions. We've all heard the old adage, "Where there's a will, there's a way". If the will to perform a certain activity is strong enough, the way to make it possible will soon follow, Vedral said. She talks about the promise of self-actualization as being the spark that energizes most people to use their will. When she speaks of self-actualization, she is referring to the fulfilling of your potential, becoming all that you can become, and using our own talents and abilities to the utmost.

#7 - The Power of Self-Motivation - When Vedral discusses self-motivation, she refers to the power to get yourself to do what you want to do. I know you've heard people say, "I can't seem to get motivated today". To become motivated, one must set goals. Find a goal that best uses your talents. One might say, "My talent! What talent? Believe me, ladies and gentlemen, each of you has a talent. Some of you have multiple talents, but are unaware of what they are. Find something you do well and enjoy doing. Think about it. Many of you can sing—yes, sing, You know about the numerous singing episodes in the shower. If you never sing any place other than the shower, how will anyone else hear you? We play musical instruments. Some of you have novels inside of you just waiting to be written and published. Ladies, those of you who play basketball, well, there's the Women National Basketball Association (WNBA). The list is endless. But first, you must discover your talents and make things happen for yourself.

Vedral does an excellent job of relating the Eight Keys to Life experiences—a prime example of learning by doing. This self-help book is useful to anyone striving for self-improvement.

Dr. Joyce L. Vedral has written eight books for adolescents and their parents. She is the author of seven workout guides, including "The 12-Minute Total-Body Workout."

Hainey Invests in Youth

Submitted by Diane Gardin, Michigan

Children are the future and Leslie Hainey of Michigan is investing in them now.

Hainey, Resource Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Berrien Springs, Michigan, saw a need in his community to

teach young people about natural resources. Hainey, an employee with NRCS for nearly 30 years, developed the Natural Resources Club in 1997 for youth in the Benton Harbor area. The Alcorn University graduate meets with the youths, ages 9 through 15, for about two hours on Thursdays.

During the interactive classes, students are taught how to use the tools, gauges, and machines used for surveying and preparing fields for crops. The students are taught safety before they use the tools.

Education is the main focus of the Natural Resources Club sessions. The students build birdhouses as part of their numerous projects. They learn how to use backyard conservation as a means to improve their environment. The children also learned about alternative meat sources such as ostrich. At a visit to an ostrich farm, the students bought ostrich meat, prepared it, and consumed it.

Hainey has taken the Natural Resources Club to visit Historically Black Colleges such as Alcorn University in Mississippi and Tennessee State University. Enroute to these destinations, Hainey often takes the students to visit historical sites.

Through a partnership with the Benton Harbor Housing Commission, Hainey developed a Futuristic Society. The society introduces young people to various occupations and identifies skills needed for a particular profession. In another partnership, Hainey and Dr. Leroy Ray, a professor at Western Michigan University, worked as a team to hold a weekend math and science camp for the young people and their parents on Dr. Ray's campgrounds. The student's parents are actively involved in the program.

Hainey is doing his part to prepare the next generation to be self-sufficient by broadening their horizons and experiences.



Natural Resources Club

Regional Representative of the Southeast Honored By City of Knoxville

The City of Knoxville, Tennessee, honored Organization member Eston Williams for helping a St. Louis, Missouri family after an automobile accident this summer. Williams received a resolution from the City of Knoxville for his humanitarian efforts. The Mayor of Knoxville read the resolution on a local radio station naming July 12 "Eston Williams Day."



Eston Williams

The family was returning from a family reunion in North Carolina when a tire on their van blew, causing the driver to lose control of the vehicle. Williams was driving to work when he spotted the family on the side of the highway. The Resource Conservation and Development Coordinator felt it was important that he stopped and help the family. An ambulance arrived and took the injured family members to the hospital and Eston followed the ambulance with several other family members who were not injured. Afterwards, he took them to his East Knoxville home, where he fed and offered them shelter for the day. He then returned to the hospital to pick up the family members who were treated and released. Later that night, he and a friend drove the family to Nashville, where they were picked up and driven to St. Louis.

Williams, who was engaged to Susie Allen at the time of the accident, said he stopped to help because he would want someone to help his family if they were in need. Williams and Allen married on July 17, shortly after the incident.

A Memorial The Organization Loses A Friend

Submitted by Sylvia Rainford, Editor



Sam Combs, Jr.

Samuel Combs, Jr., Former Chair of The Organization's Liaisons Committee and a pioneer in agriculture and conservation, died on June 30, 1999.

Combs, 67, was well known for his activities on behalf of his alma mater, Langston University. He served as an advisor to the university's Grasslands Center for Excellence, among other duties.

Combs was also known for his untiring commitment to The Organization. He received its Trailblazer Award at the first Organization conference in Atlanta in 1992, President Jim Tatum said. He served as Chair of the Liaison Committee for three years and organized the first youth group to attend this year's conference. About four to six young people are expected to attend on December 8, 1999.

"Sam was about time," Tatum said. "If your telephone rang at 5:00 a.m., you knew it was Sam."

Combs' career with the Soil Conservation Service, now the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), began in 1965 in McAlester, OK. He worked at the McAlester and Ada field offices before he was assigned as a resource conservationist at the state office in Stillwater, OK. Combs was one of the first African-Americans hired by the agency in Oklahoma and the first African-American professional to serve in the state office.

While assigned as a District Conservationist to the SCS Field Office in Tulsa in 1982, he established the SCS Urban Resource Management Workshop.

He retired from that position in 1990 after 30 years of service.

He received several awards for outstanding work during his career with SCS and NRCS. He was the only African-American to ever serve as President of the Oklahoma Soil and Water Conservation Society Chapter.

After his retirement, Combs founded a non-profit organization called Retired Educators for Agriculture Programs (REAP), whose mission is to introduce African-American youth to agriculture. He served as Executive Director of REAP and was very active in many community service initiatives until his death.

Combs leaves behind a legacy and commitment to improving the lives of small and underserved farmers and youth. Born in Bristow, OK, Combs understood the experiences of the small and underserved farmers at a very young age. Before he began his career with NRCS, Combs taught vocational agriculture at Wheatley High School in Beggs, OK.

Here are some of Sam's other accomplishments:

- Was a founder and charter member of the Langston University Agriculture Alumni Association and served as its President.
- Founded the Oklahoma Landowner's and Tenants Association and served as president until his death.
- Initiated the formation of the Grasslands Center for Excellence at Langston University.

Combs is survived by his wife Omera, and four children.

A Sam Combs Jr. Scholarship will be established at Langston University in Combs' honor, said Sherman Lewis, Director for the Center for Outreach Programs, Langston University, Oklahoma.

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Sylvia Rainford, Editor

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